

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE: ON THE ADDITIONS TO ESTHER

by

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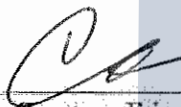
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As members of the Master's Committee, we certify that we have read the thesis prepared by Angel Bustamante, titled *But Wait, There's More: On the Additions to Esther* and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Master's Degree.


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וְיִתֵּן מִתְּהִלָּה בְּנֵי הַזֶּהָר עֲשׂוֹת סִפְרֵי הַרְבֵּה אֵין לֹץ וְלִהְיֵה הַרְבֵּה יִגְעַת בְּשׂוֹר:

Ecc. 12:12

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List of Abbreviations

<i>AB</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>CBET</i>	<i>Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumrân</i>
<i>SBLDS</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</i>

Abstract

This thesis examines the Greek Additions to the book of Esther. These Additions are found in both Greek versions of the book, but not in the Hebrew version. In Chapter 1 I discuss the history of the Hebrew (MT) and Greek texts (LXX, AT). The history of all three of the texts is too complicated to discuss in great detail, but a broad overview is necessary to understand the context of the Additions.

In Chapter 2 I examine the Additions in depth. It seems that the Additions come in pairs, with one complementing the other. It is often very difficult to date the Additions, and most of the time nothing more than a *terminus post quem* or *terminus ante quem* can be offered. In the case of some of the Additions, it is uncertain whether they were originally written in Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic. That said, two were clearly originally written in Greek, which demonstrates that the Additions were not composed by just one author.

In the Conclusion I examine then asks why the Additions were written, determining that they were added both to heighten the drama and to include God explicitly in the text. I also conclude that, the authors of Esther and the Additions seem to be cautiously optimistic about relations between the Jews and the Hellenistic monarchs.

Introduction

The Esther story has been beloved both by Jews and Christians for millennia. Whether read in a synagogue service for Purim or in the quiet of one's own home, it has long enchanted readers with the story of the evil Haman, the righteous Mordechai, and the poor orphan Esther, who later ascends to the queenship of all of Persia and saves the people of Israel from destruction. It is a story of courage and court intrigue in which the seemingly unrelated events soon become threads in a giant tapestry depicting God's saving action on behalf of his people.¹

Given that it is such a beloved book, in both the Jewish and Christian traditions, it is surprising at the popular level that the book of Esther exists in three different versions: one Hebrew version (the Masoretic Text, hereafter MT), and two Greek versions (the LXX version and the Alpha Text).² But this should not be surprising, since it gives us a window in scriptural composition. There are six additional chapters included in the Greek versions of Esther which the surviving Hebrew text does not contain. This has caused scholars to propose various theories about the relationship(s) between the composition of all three versions of Esther. What is the content of these Additions? Where do they come from? These are the questions that will be addressed in this thesis.

Before analyzing the content and meaning of the Additions, however, the three versions of Esther need to be discussed: the MT, the LXX, and AT. A (very) broad overview of all three of these versions will be presented in Chapter 1. It will soon become clear that Esther raises issues relating to the composition of the MT and Septuagint as a whole, and therefore pertains

¹ Though God is never mentioned in the Hebrew version of Esther, he is commonly assumed to be directing the events behind-the-scenes.

² Hanna Kahana, *Esther: Juxtaposition of the Septuagint Translation with the Hebrew Text* (CBET 30; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), XXVIII. The Alpha Text (AT) is also called the L text and o' text for reasons discussed below.

not only to the book of Esther, but for every other book of the Old Testament, both in Hebrew and Greek, as well.

In Chapter 2 an overview of each Addition will be presented. It will be discovered that each of the six Additions seems to pair with another, and that the group forms a ring-composition in Esther itself. Generally, the Additions serve to heighten the drama and theological content of Esther. Finally, in the Conclusion section we will examine the provenance of the Additions and will agree with Noah Hacham's argument (see below) that the Additions provide a window into Diaspora Judaism. The author (or authors) of Esther seems to be somewhat comfortable in the Hellenistic world, though he still looks to God to save his people if necessary.

Chapter 1: The MT, LXX, and AT of Esther

MT

The History and Text of the MT

In this paper, the Masoretic Text (MT) refers to the surviving Hebrew text(s) of the book of Esther as preserved in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, which is a diplomatic edition of the Westminster Leningrad Codex (hereafter WLC).³ The WLC is the oldest complete surviving Hebrew text of the entire Jewish Bible. It dates to ca. 1008 CE and reproduces the Hebrew text in the Masoretic tradition with Tiberian vocalization.⁴ There are several things to be unpacked here. Firstly, the Masorites were scholars who transmitted the text of the Hebrew Bible.⁵ They flourished in the West ca. 780–930 CE, particularly at Tiberias, a small town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.⁶ They copied with painstaking accuracy the Hebrew text that came down to them.⁷ Thus, the WLC is a manuscript of the entire Hebrew Bible as transmitted through the Masoretic school at Tiberias ca. 1008 CE.

The WLC itself only represents one manuscript in the MT tradition. According to Tov, there are three stages in the history of Hebrew Bible transmission. The first stage ends with the destruction of the Second Temple, and is “characterized by internal differences in the textual transmission.”⁸ The second stage is from 70 CE – the 8th century CE, when there is a “relatively

³ A diplomatic edition reproduces the text of one major manuscript, though other manuscripts may be used in the critical apparatus.

⁴ Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*, trans. Erroll Rhodes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 37.

⁵ Indeed, even the term “Masorites” comes from the Hebrew root מָסַר, which means “to hand down.”

⁶ Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, 24. I use the term “West” here to designate Palestine, as opposed to the “East” in Persia.

⁷ In the Masora Parva, which are notes written next to the Hebrew text, the Masorites note how many times a particular form appears, hapax legomena words, and other textual oddities. See Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, 28.

⁸ Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 29.

large degree of textual consistency.”⁹ In this stage, the MT became the dominant text-type of the Hebrew Bible. Finally, the third stage was from the 8th century CE to the end of the Middle Ages. Because the text-type represented by the WLC slowly became the dominant version of the MT tradition, there is “almost complete textual unity” between the surviving manuscripts of this era.¹⁰ Thus, the WLC is part of the larger MT tradition, which itself is only one text-type of the Hebrew Bible. Tov sums up the evidence nicely: the MT “is strictly speaking a medieval representative of an ancient text of the Bible which already at an early stage was accepted as the sole text by a central stream in Judaism. [...] The final form of this text was determined in the Middle Ages.”¹¹

Since the Hebrew text originally consisted of consonants only, it is necessary to distinguish between the older consonantal text and the more recent vocalic system. Würthwein notes that the consonantal Hebrew text of the medieval era may have originated as early as 100 CE.¹² Before this, however, several different text types existed.¹³ He notes that there is no single authoritative textual tradition at Qumran: indeed, the Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX, and MT text types are all represented.¹⁴ On the other hand, he also notes that, “As part of the great Jewish revival which marked the decades after the catastrophe of 70 CE, the canonical status of certain disputed books of the Old Testament was defined at the Council of Jamnia [...] and an authoritative text of the Old Testament was also established.”¹⁵ It is commonly asserted that the

⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹³ As discussed below, vowels (the so-called “pointed text”) and text-types (the consonantal text) are two different issues.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13. Würthwein here mentions the Council of Jamnia, which is a legendary Jewish council said to have determined the canon of the Hebrew Bible in the late first century CE. Most scholars today doubt that such a council even occurred.

text of the Pharisees won out ca. 100 CE since they were the dominant religious group with the Sadducees waning in power after the Temple was destroyed.¹⁶ Jobes and Silva sum up the evidence well:

The Dead Sea Scrolls [...] provide indisputable evidence that [...] the text of at least some books of the Hebrew Scriptures circulated in more than one form. One of these textual forms, however, emerged as *the* [italics theirs] standard text by the beginning of the second century CE, apparently supplanting all previous Hebrew texts.¹⁷

Concerning the pointed text, the WLC uses Tiberian vocalization, which was one way of pronouncing the consonantal Hebrew text.¹⁸ Würthwein notes, however, that the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Samaritan text, which are older than the MT, show an older and slightly different pronunciation.¹⁹ Tov writes, “It seems that the Tiberian tradition reflects in many details a Tiberian pronunciation of the eighth and ninth centuries.”²⁰ In other words, “Tiberian vocalization reflects forms which are late or dialectal, but not artificial.”²¹ The pronunciation of Hebrew, like that of every language, changed over time. Other surviving Biblical texts (such as the Samaritan Pentateuch or transliterations in the LXX and Vulgate) give slightly different and older pronunciations. The vocalization of the consonantal Hebrew text in the WLC was closer to the early medieval pronunciation than it would have been to the pronunciation of Hebrew in the 1st century CE or before.

¹⁶ However, it is difficult to tie text-types to religious groups. This danger is apparent in Qumran, where the Essenes (?) collected several different text-types.

¹⁷ Karen Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 25.

¹⁸ “Pointed” refers to the vowel marks above, below, or alongside the consonantal text.

¹⁹ Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, 27.

²⁰ Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 27.

²¹ *Ibid.*

The Book of Esther in the MT

The book of Esther is one of the shorter books of the Hebrew Bible. It consists of 8 chapters in Hebrew, and describes how a young Jewish woman, Esther, becomes the wife of the Persian king Xerxes. At the same time, the evil vizier Haman plots to destroy all the Jews throughout the Persian Empire since Mordechai the Jew did not bow down to him. Mordechai tells Esther about this plot, and Esther uses her position not only to destroy Haman, but also to destroy the enemies of the Jews throughout the entire empire. The book then ends with the feast of Purim, which is to be celebrated yearly to remember the deliverance of the Jews.

It is difficult to provide a history of Esther. In fact, it is the only Biblical book not yet found at Qumran.²² However, in 1956, several fragments were found in Qumran that seem to recall the Esther story. Scholars differ in opinion as to whether these are related to Esther or not. De Troyer concludes, after surveying the fragments and their interpretation by scholars, that “The fragments are part of a pseudo-historical story from the Persian period [...]. I would call these stories ‘Persian court tales’ and refrain from using the name of Esther in this context.”²³ However, after analyzing similar wording in the *Genesis Apocryphon* and the *Temple Scroll* and the text of Esther, she also concludes that the Hebrew book of Esther was known at Qumran, even if no manuscripts of it survive.²⁴

By the time the MT represented in the WLC was written (ca. 1008 CE), the book of Esther was already included in the canon of the Jewish (and Christian) Bible. However, the historicity of the events in Esther is in doubt. Michael Fox provides the following list of reasons

²² Kristin De Troyer, “Once More, the So-Called Esther Fragments of Cave 4,” *RevQ* 19 (2000): 401–422, esp. 401.

²³ *Ibid.*, 411.

²⁴ Troyer, “Esther Fragments,” 422.

arguing against its historicity.²⁵ (1) Esther 2:16 notes that Esther was taken to Xerxes in 480 BCE. However, according to Herodotus, this same Xerxes was invading Greece in 480 BC, marching first through Asia Minor and then northern Greece. It seems difficult to reconcile Herodotus' account of Xerxes as general with Esther's account of Xerxes at Susa. (2) There are questions about the historical record. According to Esther, the Jews massacred their foes in Susa and throughout the Persian Empire. Yet as Fox notes, it is difficult to understand how "Xerxes would allow massive, uncontrolled battles, leading to the death of thousands, to take place throughout his empire."²⁶ However, no systematic massacre is mentioned in the historical record. Also missing is a Jewish queen named Esther, as well as two sequential non-Persian viziers (Haman and Mordechai, respectively). (3) Mordechai was exiled to Babylon in 587 BCE.²⁷ If so, how would he have been alive in 480 BCE and/or had a cousin young enough to marry?²⁸

Such are the difficulties for one taking Esther as historical fact. The language of Esther, however, can provide us clues as to when the book was written. Even a cursory glance over the Hebrew text of Esther shows that many Persian words are used. These are listed by Kahana.²⁹ She notes, however, that unlike in Daniel, there are no Greek words used in the book. From this evidence she concludes, "that the composition of the scroll, in its final form, was completed either in the late Persian or the early Hellenistic period."³⁰ Thus, the MT text of Esther, produced around 1008 CE and descended from a text-type that emerged as early as the late Persian or early

²⁵ The following discussion is taken from Michael V. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 133–137.

²⁶ Fox, *Character and Ideology*, 133.

²⁷ Esther 2:6.

²⁸ Fox does note, however, that the name of Xerxes' first wife, "Amēstris" [*sic*] (according to Herodotus), is similar-sounding to both "Esther" and "Vashti." But Fox argues that Amestris cannot be Esther, since "Amestris had Xerxes' third son in about 483, before Esther came on the scene in 480." Likewise, Fox argues that Amestris cannot be Vashti, since "Amēstris accompanied Xerxes to Sardis in 480 and was still acting very much as queen." Fox, *Character and Ideology*, 136.

²⁹ The words are: כתר, דת, כרפס, ביתן, פרתימים, פתשגן, גנזים, אחשדרפנים, פתגם. See Kahana, *Esther*, XXV.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, XXV.

Hellenistic period, and purports to describe events that took place about 150 years prior, ca. 480 BCE.

So far, our discussion has dealt with issues involving the transmission, text, and provenance of the scroll. But what does the scroll actually say? Why was it written? The story of Esther contains several overlapping themes: the Jews in exile, anti-Semitism, and an etiology of the Festival of Purim. It also purports to be a history. Michael Fox thinks that the book belongs to the following genres: diaspora story, history, festival etiology, and festival lection.³¹ For him, “There is no reason to insist on a single structure in each text [...]. A text, like life in general, is organized—or organizable—into a multitude of domains.”³² In other words, genres by nature have fuzzy boundaries, and it is possible for a work to share in several different genres at once (albeit to a varying degrees).

The question of to which genre the book of Esther belongs is also connected to the question of the composition of Esther. As will be seen below, some scholars divide the book of Esther into several sections, each of which has a different composition date. According to these scholars, today’s book of Esther should not be seen as a single work produced by one author, but rather as a collection of stories which were later compiled and then redacted. Perhaps, then, in this redactor theory is the solution to the question of Esther’s genre: the different layers of the book of Esther each belonged primarily to one genre, which, when put together, create a multi-layered, multi-genre work.

³¹ Fox, *Character and Ideology*, 145–150.

³² *Ibid.*, 153.

LXX

General Remarks Concerning the LXX

Simply put, the Septuagint (LXX) is a Greek translation of the Old Testament. Yet this definition is somewhat misleading, as there is no definitive Greek text of the Old Testament. In fact, the LXX can refer to any translation of the Hebrew Old Testament and Apocrypha, written by various authors over hundreds of years throughout the Greco-Roman world.³³ The terms can also refer to the recensions and revisions of these books.³⁴ The study of the LXX has consumed scholars for hundreds of years. It is a massive field that involves issues concerning philology in many different languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, among others), history, and theology. In this paper, however, LXX will refer to the earliest recoverable Greek translation of the various Hebrew books.

The Letter of Aristeas contains the earliest mention of the LXX. It claims that the Pentateuch was written by 72 elders of Israel who were summoned by Ptolemy II to Alexandria to translate the Hebrew Torah (Pentateuch) into Greek. At the end of 70 days, each elder had matching translations of the entire Pentateuch. This indicates their miraculous origins, so their translation was then received with general acclaim from the Jewish population and revered as the Word of God on par with the original Hebrew text. Scholars today do not believe this legendary origin story, but they do generally agree that the Pentateuch was translated first, probably in Alexandria, for a Greek-speaking Jewish population that had lost their ability to understand

³³ The Apocrypha refers to “Books not included in the collection of the Holy Scriptures of the Jews of Palestine.” Most (if not all) of the Apocryphal books survive only in Greek, though some may have originally been composed in Hebrew or Aramaic. See Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 135.

³⁴ The terms translation, revision, and recension are used in different ways by different scholars. It is an open question as to what counts as a recension. Is it a systematically revised work, or something else? Cf. Jobes and Silva, *Introduction*, 35–38.

Hebrew. The rest of the Hebrew Bible was translated in various places, but for the same purpose: to provide the sacred Scripture to Greek-speaking Diaspora Jews.

Though scholars do not accept the historicity of the story in the *Letter of Aristeas*, they still study the *Letter* to discover Jewish attitudes concerning the LXX. The *Letter* is a polemic: it gives divine approval to the new translation above all other versions. This is why the 72 elders all came up with the same translation; it was a sign of divine approval. In 1941, the German scholar P. Kahle used this legend to argue for the thesis that there is no one original translation of the Septuagint, no so-called Ur-text. According to him, many different translations were produced simultaneously, and it is impossible to get back to an original text. His view stands in direct contradiction to Paul de Lagarde's older view, that "there was only one initial Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures and that the recovery of that 'proto-Septuagint' [...] is the great task at hand."³⁵ Kahle's belief in a multitude of original translations is still the minority view; the majority of scholars believe in de Lagarde's Ur-text theory.³⁶

One of the main scholarly uses of the Septuagint is text-criticism of the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew manuscripts on which the Septuagint (in all its manifold versions) was based were approximately 1,000 years older than the WLC. That is, the *Vorlagen*³⁷ of the various LXX books are over 1,000 years older than most of our oldest Hebrew manuscripts. When a *Vorlage* shows a close similarity to the MT, it is called the Proto-MT. While the Dead Sea Scrolls attest textual witness for many Hebrew books, the fact remains that for the majority of the Bible, the LXX is our main (indirect) witness for the oldest readings. Its great importance in textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible has long been recognized. However, a variant reading in the LXX

³⁵ Jobs and Silva, *Introduction*, 22.

³⁶ Indeed, the most important critical edition of the LXX, the *Gottingen Septuaginta*, is founded upon the theory that there is only one original translation which we can reach with some degree of accuracy.

³⁷ The term *Vorlage* (pl. *Vorlagen*), "original," refers to a Hebrew parent text on which a translation is based.

does not necessitate a variant Hebrew *Vorlage* that differs from the MT. After a translation is made, it is subject to the same vicissitudes that plague all manuscript transmissions: scribal error, translation to flesh out theological points, and the like. It is only by comparing all extant LXX manuscripts that one can arrive at a reliable Ur-text; that is, an original translation.³⁸

Only after arriving at this Ur-text can one then use the LXX for textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, but then only with great caution. As Würthwein states, “Anyone who translates also interprets: the translation is not simply a rendering of the underlying text but also an expression of the translator’s understanding of it.”³⁹ Consequently, “we must distinguish between what is derived from the original text and what is contributed by the translator.”⁴⁰ If the translator does not translate word-for-word, but employs a “freer”⁴¹ translation technique, then we cannot assume he is translating from a different *Vorlage* every time the resulting translation differs from the MT. This is easily understood but also easily forgotten. Jobes and Silva list four reasons why there might be a difference between the LXX and the MT:

1. The Hebrew *Vorlage* from which it was translated was different from the Hebrew text extant today.
2. The translator made a mistake.
3. The translator was interpreting and contextualizing the text.
4. Some complicated combination of these circumstances affected the resulting translation.⁴²

The LXX can only be used for textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible after the translation technique is known, and only after it is certain that the scribe did not make a mistake or contextualize the text.

³⁸ No one would claim today that we have the original text of the LXX. Nevertheless, by comparing and deciding between textual variants, we can approximate it.

³⁹ Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, 48.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴¹ While words such as “free” and “literal” are imprecise, for the sake of simplicity, by “literal” I mean word-for-word correspondence and by “free” a deviation therefrom.

⁴² Jobes and Silva, *Introduction*, 97.

The LXX also contains books with different sequences of events than that preserved in the MT, and books that are much shorter than the corresponding parts of the MT. For instance, in both Esther and Daniel, the LXX contains additional chapters not found in the MT. In addition, the Greek version of Jeremiah is much shorter than the MT version. Further, the Greek versions of Joshua, Ezekiel, and Samuel differ in length and content. Lastly, Kings, Proverbs, and Genesis differ in their sequences of events.⁴³ The LXX preserves an earlier state of literary development. Due to these discrepancies between the MT and the LXX, “the current consensus is that there were at least two distinct Hebrew text forms in circulation and that the longer versions in the MT developed from the shorter versions preserved in the LXX.”⁴⁴ At the end of their book, Jobes and Silva agree with Würthwein that different Hebrew texts existed simultaneously in the Hellenistic Era, but that one Hebrew version eventually won out. This is the “Hebrew text that later developed, influenced by the tradition of the Pharisees and the later rabbis, into the MT.”⁴⁵ They concede, however, that the MT was “an ancient text that was already stable before the time of Jesus.”⁴⁶

This brings up an important point. To the extent that every translation is an interpretation, the LXX is also our earliest interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. Studying the LXX can tell us about the reception of Biblical books in the Hellenistic Era, as well as improve our understanding of the theological developments that took place at that time. This will prove important for Esther, since the Additions develop Esther in different ways by emphasizing God and the covenant.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁴⁴ Jobes and Silva, *Introduction*, 162.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

The LXX (o' Text) Version of Esther

The first and most widely attested version of Esther in Greek is the LXX version.⁴⁷ As noted above, there are six additional sections of material found in the LXX version of Esther that are not found in the MT version. These six additions were later written into the text, though there is debate about which additions had a Hebrew or Aramaic *Vorlage*, and which were original Greek compositions. Jobes and Silva explain:

The additional chapters in the Greek add the explicitly religious elements missing from the Hebrew. The syntax, vocabulary, and style of the Greek of these additions differ so much from the rest of the book that they were certainly introduced by an editor sometime after the original translation was produced.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the additions introduce specific Jewish themes into the text of Esther, a text notorious for its lack of mention of God. These additions, the original language of their composition, and their key themes will be discussed in Chapter 2.

The LXX book of Esther is unique in that it is the only book that contains a colophon.

The colophon reads as follows:

ἔτους τετάρτου βασιλεύοντος Πτολεμαίου καὶ Κλεοπάτρας εἰσήνεγκεν Δοσίθεος, ὃς ἔφη εἶναι, ἱερεὺς καὶ Λευίτης, καὶ Πτολεμαῖος ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ τὴν προκειμένην ἐπιστολὴν τῶν Φρουρῶν ἣν ἔφασαν εἶναι, καὶ ἑρμηνευκέναι Λυσίμαχον Πτολεμαίου, τῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ.

In the fourth year of the rule of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheos, who said he was a priest and Levite, and Ptolemy his son, brought the above book of Purim, which they said was genuine, and (they said) that Lysimachus the son of Ptolemy translated it, one of the men of Jerusalem.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ The LXX version of Esther is also called the o' text (o' being the Greek way of writing seventy). The abbreviation o' refers to the seventy original translators of the Pentateuch. It is not intended to imply that those same 70 elders translated Esther, or even that the o' text is the earliest translation. The designation serves to distinguish it from the Alpha-Text (AT).

⁴⁸ Jobes and Silva, *Introduction*, 105.

⁴⁹ Esther 10:11. The translation is the author's own.

Scholars use this colophon to date the translation of Esther as a whole, though there is debate about which Ptolemy is meant. Moore believes that Ptolemy VIII Soter II is meant, which “would mean that the colophon dates to ca. 114 B.C.”⁵⁰ He also believes that all of the additions were already incorporated into the Esther scroll by this date, except for Additions B and E, because of their high literary style.⁵¹ Additions B and E are universally agreed to be original Greek compositions based upon their style, and so are not based on a Semitic *Vorlage*. Lastly, scholars agree that the LXX’s *Vorlage* is similar to, if not almost identical with, the MT (the so-called Proto-MT). The translator generally remains close to the Proto-MT text, though he does not translate word-for-word.

The AT Version of Esther

The second Greek version of Esther is found in only four manuscripts dating from the Medieval period.⁵² It is known by two names: L and the Alpha-Text (AT).⁵³ The AT is the most perplexing version of Esther, and its relationship to both the LXX version and the MT has long puzzled scholars. Jobs notes that, “the total AT is, in spite of the additions, shorter than the MT by about 20%.”⁵⁴ The shocking difference in both length and material between the MT and the AT has led many scholars to believe that the AT represents an altogether different textual tradition of the book of Esther.

⁵⁰ Carey A. Moore, “On the Origins of the LXX Additions to the Book of Esther,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 382–393, esp. 383.

⁵¹ Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah: The Additions* (AB 44; Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), 17.

⁵² Robert Hanhart, ed., *Esther* (vol. 8; Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Göttingensis editum 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 15.

⁵³ The name L refers to Lucian, a Christian martyr who produced a recension of the LXX in the second half of the 3rd century AD. Since the AT was found in the four manuscripts appended to Lucian’s recension, it was long thought that the AT was a Lucianic recension of the Book of Esther. However, Moore argued in 1965 that the AT was not Lucianic. Nevertheless, AT is still sometimes designated as L.

⁵⁴ Karen Jobs, *The Alpha-Text of Esther: Its Character and Relationship to the Masoretic Text* (SBLDS 153; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 62.

The main question is whether the AT's *Vorlage* is the Proto-MT (like the LXX), or whether, as just suggested, it represents a different textual tradition entirely. Emmanuel Tov sums up current research by stating that to David Clines and Michael Fox, two Esther scholars, "L [AT] reflects a different and pristine text, which helps us to reconstruct the development of the book."⁵⁵ Jobs and Silva believe that "the two Greek versions were two independently made translations but that the *Vorlage* of each was similar to the extant MT."⁵⁶ Tov argues that the AT was based upon the LXX version, but was corrected in line with a Hebrew or Aramaic text different from the MT.⁵⁷ Clearly, scholars disagree broadly about the relationships between the LXX, AT, and the MT versions of Esther.

There are also two Greek versions of Daniel, the OG Daniel (o') and the Theodotion Daniel (θ').⁵⁸ One might wonder whether there is any correspondence between the two versions of Esther and the two versions of Daniel. Jobs and Silva conclude that, "The o'-Text (LXX) of Esther has affinities with θ' Daniel in that it follows the MT more closely; AT Esther has affinities with OG Daniel, such as a more diverse lexical stock."⁵⁹ And while θ' Daniel is most often seen as a revision of OG Daniel, AT Esther is commonly seen as a translation of Esther separate from the MT and LXX. As Hanhart writes, "Der 'L-Text' ist nicht eine Rezension des o'Textes, sondern eine Neugestaltung der griech."⁶⁰

Lastly, it should also be noted that the colophon that ends the LXX is found only in one manuscript of the AT, with wording almost identical to that of the version in the LXX. This

⁵⁵ Emanuel Tov, "The 'Lucianic' Text of the Canonical and Apocryphal Sections of Esther: A Rewritten Biblical Book," in *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 72; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 548.

⁵⁶ Jobs and Silva, *Introduction*, 324–325.

⁵⁷ Tov, "The 'Lucianic' Text," 548.

⁵⁸ Theodotion was the author of a recension of the LXX. There is doubt, however, about whether θ' was written by him or not.

⁵⁹ Jobs and Silva, *Introduction*, 325.

⁶⁰ Hanhart, *Esther*, 87.

shows that the colophon was not included in the AT, but was later interpolated by an unknown scribe to align it with the LXX.

Summary

The Book of Esther exists in three forms: the MT, LXX, and AT. The MT is the text-type transmitted by the Masoretic tradition, the best known representative of which, the WLC, achieved a largely fixed form ca. 1008 CE in Tiberias. It represents the Hebrew text that became standardized after the fall of Jerusalem (70 CE), though several other text-types are known to have existed before this date. The Old Greek (OG) LXX, on the other hand, was translated by anonymous authors at various places and at various times. It is of unknown provenance, though it is generally agreed that the Pentateuch was translated first for the Greek-speaking Jews of Egypt. The LXX Esther is agreed to have had a Hebrew *Vorlage* that closely approximated, if it was not identical with, the current MT (the so-called Proto-MT).⁶¹ Lastly, the AT form of Esther is quite different from the MT and LXX form of Esther. Because of this, the AT is generally agreed to have had a different Semitic *Vorlage* than the MT and LXX. However, the relationships between the AT, the MT and LXX are still unclear, with different scholars coming to different conclusions.

Complicating this scenario are the six additional chapters that are found in the two Greek versions of Esther, but not the MT version. While these six Additions are in large part the same, they also differ slightly in the LXX and the AT. Scholars have attempted to use these Additions to reconstruct the various compositional stages of Esther. What is the content of the Additions?

⁶¹ Not counting the additions, of course.

How are they different in the two Greek versions? What do they add thematically to the shorter MT text? These are the questions that will be taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: The Additions

Preliminary Remarks

The Additions of Esther consist of six additional chapters (designated A, B, C, D, E, and F) found in the Greek versions of Esther but not in the MT. The numbering of the chapters is unusual. Thematically, the chapters are interspersed throughout Esther, and so one would expect the chapters to be numbered in chronological order: since Addition A occurs before the material found in ch. 1, Addition A should be marked as such, or even called ch. 1 itself. However, this is not the case. Addition A in fact is labeled chapters 11–12. This is due to Jerome, the author/redactor of the Vulgate. Jerome gave priority to the Hebrew text and so translated Esther from it. However, he revered the Greek version and the church officials too much to remove the Additions entirely, so he placed them all at the end of the Book of Esther. Thus, in the Greek version Addition A (ch. 11–12) actually begins the book, while Addition B (ch. 13) is found between chs. 2 and 3, and so forth.⁶² There are several different ways to number the Additions, but this is the method that will be followed in this paper.⁶³

It is also important to note that the Additions come in pairs. To begin with, Additions A and F bookend Esther and are clearly meant to go together. The former contains an account of Mordechai's dream and the later the interpretation of that dream. Additions B and E, placed near the outer edges of the story, also go together. The first contains the royal edict to exterminate the Jews, and the second the edict allowing the Jews to exterminate their enemies. Lastly, Additions C and D go together. These are placed back-to-back and consist of Mordechai's and Esther's

⁶² The appendix to this paper contains a chart showing the Additions and their placement in the text.

⁶³ This method is also followed by the NRSV. All Scriptural quotations are taken from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

prayers and Esther's entrance before the king. They are placed near the middle of the book and are clearly the high point of Greek Esther. It appears that the Additions were written in pairs, one complementing the other, in a concentric way: Additions A and F bookend Esther, Additions B and E stand near the outer edge, and C and D are in the middle.

Lastly, it should be noted that the Additions are not identical in the LXX and AT, though the wording is similar enough that it is clear that there is some amount of interdependence between them. As Noah Hacham explains, "The scholarly consensus tends overwhelmingly to the view that the Additions to Esther appearing in the AT are a later reworking of the ones found in the LXX."⁶⁴ Thus, whatever the relationship between the LXX and AT versions of Esther, it is generally agreed that the Additions appeared in the LXX version first, and were then reworked and reworded to fit within the AT.

Additions A and F

Since Addition A begins Esther, and Addition F ends Esther and explains Addition A, it is fitting to examine these two Additions together. Addition A contains the story of Mordechai's dream. He sees two dragons, at whose cry the nations of the earth prepare for war against the nation of Israel. Then Israel cries to God, "and at their outcry, as though from a tiny spring, there came a great river, with abundant water; light came, and the sun rose, and the lowly were exalted and devoured those held in honor" (Esther 11:10–11). The next day, Mordechai discovers a plot by two eunuchs to kill the king of Persia. Mordechai tells the king, the eunuchs are put to death, and the king enters the episode in the royal chronicles. Addition A ends ominously: "But Haman

⁶⁴Noah Hacham, "3 Maccabees and Esther: Parallels, Intertextuality, and Diaspora Identity," *JBL* 126 (2007): 765–85, esp. 779.

son of Hammedatha, a Bougean, who was in great honor with the king, determined to injure Mordechai and his people because of the two eunuchs of the king” (Esther 12:6). The Addition is thus comprised of three parts: a brief prologue (11:1–4), the dream itself (11:5–12), and the plot against the king (ch. 12).

There are several interesting differences in Addition A between the LXX and AT. In the LXX, the Persian king is named Ἀρταξέρξης, but in the AT the king is Ασσήρος. It is probably impossible to explain this difference. In both the LXX and AT, this episode is said to have taken place during the month of Nissan (v. 1). In the AT, the writer explains this in terms suitable for a Greek reader: the story took place in the Jewish months of Adar and Nisan, which corresponded to the Macedonian months Dystros and Xanthikos.⁶⁵ The names of the two eunuchs are also different, but perhaps the most important discrepancy is in the name of Haman.⁶⁶ In the LXX, he is called Ἀμαν Βουγαῖος, “Haman Bougaios.” In the AT, he is called Ἀμαν Μακεδών, “Haman the Macedonian.” It need not be stressed that Haman is called “Bougaios” specifically in the LXX and “the Macedonian” in the AT, since in Addition E, the titles will be flipped: the LXX will call Haman “the Macedonian” and the AT will call him “Bougaios” (Esther 16:10). What is of note here is the significance of these two names. The exact meaning of Bougaios is still unknown, and no convincing argument has yet been raised that solves the problem. The word Macedonian, on the other hand, likely implies that Addition A was made at some point during the Hellenistic Era.

In Addition F, Mordechai remembers his dream and interprets it in light of the Esther story.⁶⁷ Yet there is a problem, the interpretations of the dream in the LXX and AT versions of

⁶⁵ ἔτους δευτέρου βασιλεύοντος Ασσήρου τοῦ μεγάλου μιᾷ τοῦ μηνὸς Ἀδαρ Νισαν (ὅς ἐστιν Δύστρος Ξανθικός).

⁶⁶ The eunuchs are Gabatha and Tharra in the LXX, and Astaos and Thedeutes in the AT.

⁶⁷ Addition F consists of 10:4–13.

Esther don't match. In the LXX, Mordechai says that the river represented Esther, and the two dragons represented himself and Haman. In the AT, he states that the small spring represented Esther, and the river the nations gathered to destroy the Jews. The two dragons again are understood to represent Mordechai and Haman, and the sun and light the presence of God. Thus, in the LXX Mordechai only interprets two things, and in one of those things (the river) he differs in his interpretation from what is found in the AT.⁶⁸

The discrepancies in the interpretation of the dream in the LXX and AT, not to mention the strangeness of seeing Mordechai as a dragon led Carey Moore to conclude that “the dream in Addition A was originally a separate Semitic entity circulating independently of the Esther story; and since in broad lines the dream could be adapted to Esther, it so was, even though some features of the dream were less appropriate than others.”⁶⁹ In other words, Moore believes that the dream described in Addition A was originally an independent story that was later interpolated into Esther. Since the dream does not fit the Esther-story exactly, two different interpretations of it were made (the LXX and AT versions) to adapt it to Esther. This is an interesting argument, and one that Anne Gardner accepts, though with a narrower focus: “There is little that one can positively say about the additions to Esther except that perhaps part of addition A, the dream of *Mardocheaus* [*sic*], may have circulated as a separate unit relating to the *Maccebean* [*sic*] crisis.”⁷⁰

Whatever the provenance of Additions A and F, it is clear that they are interpolations because of some internal inconsistencies. For instance, in chapter 2, Mordechai is introduced as

⁶⁸ It is also noteworthy that the AT contains an additional verse: “And all the people shouted in a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you, Lord, who remembered the covenants of our fathers. Amen.’” (10:58, translation author’s own). This verse makes clear that, at least in the AT, Mordechai recounts his dream before the crowd.

⁶⁹ Moore, “Origins,” 389. Dragons in apocalyptic literature usually refer to a great evil (cf. Daniel and Revelation), and thus would seem to be inappropriate for Mordechai.

⁷⁰ Anne E Gardner, “The Relationship of the Additions to the Book of Esther to the Maccabean Crisis,” *JSJ* 15 (1984): 1–8, esp. 8.

if for the first time: “Now there was a Jew in Susa, the capital whose name was Mordecai son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin” (Esther 2:5). The eunuch’s plot to kill the king in Addition A also occurs again at 2:19–12. It is clear that whoever compiled Addition A took these two portions of the Hebrew text and worked them into the story of Mordechai’s dream.

Moore suggests that since the colophon, which comes at the end of Addition F, was written in 114 BCE (see chapter 1), and since Additions A and F go together, these two Additions were already included in the Esther scroll by 114 BCE.⁷¹ He also points out that “there are very strong apocalyptic elements, as exemplified in the dragon motif, the eschatological or Day-of-the-Lord imagery, and the anti-Gentile attitude” that seem to relate to other Hellenistic-era Jewish writings, most notably Daniel.⁷² However, Josephus and the Old Latin version omit 11:12–12:6, and Josephus omits Addition F. Moore believes that since Josephus and the Old Latin do not mention these verses, “the verses [...] may have been written as late as the 2nd or 3rd century A.D.”⁷³ There is no reason to think that Additions A and F were not included by this time, but this is still noteworthy.⁷⁴ Lastly, Moore believes that 1:1–11 probably had a Semitic *Vorlage*, but that 12:1–6 was probably a Greek composition.⁷⁵ He also believes that Addition F was likely written in Hebrew or Aramaic, as well.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Moore, “Origins,” 383.

⁷² Gardner, “Relationship of Additions,” 6.

⁷³ Moore, “Origins,” 388.

⁷⁴ As Moore explains, “the *Vetus Latina* [italics his], the Coptic, and Ethiopic are clearly based upon the LXX (or B-text), although the OL does have a number of readings agreeing with the A-text.” This makes the OL a valuable, though largely ignored, resource for textual criticism. See Moore, *The Additions*, 18.

⁷⁵ Several Greek words in v. 1–11 are well-known translation equivalents from Hebrew, as is the case with Addition F below. On the other hand, ch. 12 does not appear in Josephus or the Old Latin version and does not seem to contain any translation equivalents.

⁷⁶ Moore, “Origins,” 388.

In 1975, R. A. Martin attempted to discover the original language of the Additions through an analysis of the syntax. Martin took portions of compositional Hellenistic Greek texts and portions of the LXX to define seventeen criteria to allow a scholar to determine if a Greek text is compositional (original) Greek or translational (from Hebrew) Greek.⁷⁷ According to his analysis, Addition A, taken as a whole, could be either translational or compositional Greek. Perhaps this is due to the fact that he included all of Addition A in his analysis, and did not break it into three sections as Moore did. Whatever the case, it is difficult to tell if Addition A is translational or compositional Greek. Likewise, Martin notes that “Add F would appear to be either original-Greek or a very free translation of a Semitic *Vorlage*.”⁷⁸

Additions B and E

Like Additions A and F, Additions B and E should also be considered together. Additions B and E purport to give the text of two royal letters sent by King Artaxerxes to his entire empire. The first letter details how Haman, the king’s second-in-command, “pointed out to us that among all the nations in the world there is scattered a certain hostile people, who have laws contrary to those of every nation and continually disregard the ordinances of the kings” (Esther 13:4). This nation is obviously the Jews. Therefore, Haman has decreed that “all [Jews]—wives and children included—be utterly destroyed by the swords of their enemies, without pity or restraint, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, of this present year” (Esther 13:6). Given that this letter was sent to “the governors of the hundred twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia”

⁷⁷ It is outside the scope of this paper to fully develop Martin’s methodology or add/critique it. See R. A. Martin, *Syntactical Evidence of Semitic Sources in Greek Documents* (SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies 3; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974) for more information.

⁷⁸ R. A. Martin, “Syntax Criticism of the LXX Additions to the Book of Esther,” *JBL* (1975): 65–72, esp. 69.

(13:1), the implication was that the entire Jewish race living in the Persian kingdom was to be destroyed on one single day.

On the other hand, in Addition E, after Esther succeeds in overturning Haman's plot and Haman is killed, another royal decree is issued. In a complete reversal, the decree states that Haman became bloodthirsty and haughty because of his position, and sought to kill an innocent nation. In both the LXX and AT, Haman is identified as non-Persian, and it is suggested that he wanted to transfer the Persian kingdom to the Macedonians.⁷⁹ The LXX even calls Haman a Macedonian here (Esther 16:10). Addition E calls Mordechai "our savior and perpetual benefactor," Esther is "the blameless partner of our kingdom," and the Jews are "governed by most righteous laws and are children of the living God, most high, most mighty" (Esther 16:13–16). This letter ends by granting the Jews permission to defend themselves against all their aggressors, and a command for the Jews to celebrate the day yearly.

It is clear why Additions B and E might have been included in Esther. The MT states that there were two royal decrees, one for the destruction of the Jews and another rescinding that previous order. But the MT does not present the text of either letter, so an enterprising later writer might have decided to include the text of both decrees. But we are getting ahead of ourselves here. How do we know that Additions B and E are later interpolations into Esther?

It is unanimously agreed that Additions B and E were composed in Greek. Moore explains this in terms of both external and internal evidence. He explains that versions based on the Hebrew text lack the Additions, while those versions based on the LXX include the Additions.⁸⁰ Overall it is their rhetorical style that gives them away: "their literary style, which is

⁷⁹ It might be noted here that the Persian king should probably have felt more threatened by the Greeks than by the Macedonians at this time, having just failed in his invasion of Greece.

⁸⁰ Moore, "Origins," 384.

best characterized as florid, rhetorical, and bombastic, is free of all Hebraisms and is quite unlike Greek translation of other Semitic decrees in the Bible.”⁸¹ In other words, the Greek of Additions B and E reads unlike any other portion of Esther.⁸² Martin agrees and concludes from his data that Additions B and E were definitely original Greek compositions.⁸³

There are some interesting textual issues that further confirm this. In Esther 16:7, Addition E, 23 find the following: “What has been wickedly accomplished [...] can be seen, not so much from the more ancient records [ἱστοριῶν] that we hand on, as from investigation of matters close at hand” (Esther 16:7). The phrase for “ancient records” in Hebrew would be דברי הימים.⁸⁴ If Addition E were a translation of a Semitic text, it is probable that it would follow this word order more exactly (as the rest of Greek Esther does).⁸⁵ The word ἱστοριῶν occurs in both the LXX and AT version. Lastly, v. 32 of the AT includes perhaps the only optative verb found in Greek Esther.⁸⁶ Optative verbs in Koine are rare since they were already falling out of use by that time.⁸⁷ The fact that an optative word does occur here could be evidence of compositional Greek. Though the argument made from the phrase “ancient records” and the optative mood in Greek are insufficient to prove that Additions B and E are original Greek compositions, they reinforce the scholarly consensus that they are.

There is a major link between Additions B and E and another Hellenic-Jewish work: 3 Maccabees. The name “Maccabees” is a misnomer, since the plot of the book has nothing to do with the Maccabees, but instead deals with the Jews in Alexandria, who found themselves in a

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² The present author agrees that the Greek of these two Additions is the most challenging in the whole book of Esther.

⁸³ Martin, “Syntax Criticism,” 69.

⁸⁴ דברי הימים is the Hebrew name of the Biblical book “Chronicles.” The phrase literally translates to “affairs of the days.”

⁸⁵ Probably by including some form of the word λογός to translate דברי, as often happens in the Greek.

⁸⁶ The word is ποιῆσαι, which forms the protasis of a mixed conditional.

⁸⁷ Modern Greek has no optative mood.

similar situation to the Jews in Persia. There are a number of interesting parallels here, so a brief overview is in order. The book opens with Ptolemy IV fighting the Battle of Raphia against Antiochus III in 217 BCE. Ptolemy was in danger of losing the battle until his queen Arsinoe urged on the troops with “wailing and tears” until they finally won (3 Macc. 1:4). An apostate Jew, named Dositheus, saves Ptolemy from a plot against his life.⁸⁸ On his return to Alexandria, Ptolemy attempts to enter the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple, but is stricken by God with paralysis and is taken away (3 Macc. 22:23).

Incensed that he was not able to enter the Temple, he sends out a letter that all Jews are to be captured, bound, and taken to Alexandria to be killed in the hippodrome. This decree is received with great mourning by all the Jews while the king feasts happily (3 Macc. 4:2, 4:16). The night before the public execution, God puts the king into a deep sleep, so that he sleeps through the scheduled execution. The following day, God causes the king to forget, so that he does not order the execution and is angry when his servants inform him of it. Finally, on the third day, the priest Eleazar prays, and God sends “two glorious angels of fearful aspect [...], visible to all but the Jews” (3 Macc. 6:18). These angels “opposed the forces of the enemy and filled them with confusion and terror,” so that even “the animals turned back upon the armed forces following them and began trampling and destroying them” (3 Macc. 6:19; 6:21). Thereupon the king has a change of heart, reproves those who wanted to destroy the Jews, and sends them all back home. The Jews then hold feasts and decide to make an annual holiday to align with the date of destruction (3 Macc. 6:38). The king sends a second letter rescinding his previous letter. In the second letter he sings the praises of the Jews while scolding their enemies. The book ends with the Jews killing all apostate Jews and recovering their own stolen property.

⁸⁸ Curiously, the name Dositheus is also found in the colophon of Esther. Of course, any connection between the two men is speculative.

Even at the surface level, it is easy to see parallels between 3 Maccabees and Esther. Toward the beginning of 3 Maccabees, Ptolemy is saved by a Jew (albeit an apostate), whereas in Esther the king's life is saved by Mordechai. Queen Arsinoe effectively saves the kingdom by her weeping and wailing. In Esther, Esther saves the kingdom by revealing Haman's plot. In 3 Maccabees, Ptolemy issues two royal edicts, one ordering the destruction of the Jews, the second blessing the Jews, which parallels the situation with Addition B and E in Esther. Ptolemy's second letter says that the enemies of the Jews have malicious intent and calls the Jews children of God, much like Addition E, 16:16 does. In 3 Maccabees, the wailing of the Jews and the feasting of the king play major roles, as they do in Esther, as well. Lastly, 3 Maccabees ends with the Jews establishing an annual feast—much like Purim—and the Jews slaughtering their enemies.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, Noah Hacham believes that the importance of these apparent parallels has been overstated. For example, as he sees it the story of the destruction of the Jews, followed by a holiday, “is not unique to these two works and appears elsewhere in Second Temple Jewish literature, including 1 [...] Maccabees.”⁹⁰ He also finds the arguments based upon the similar prayers and in the establishment of a holiday—Purim and the unnamed feast in 3 Maccabees—unpersuasive.⁹¹ Specifically, he argues that “as a pervasive theme in Second Temple and in Hellenistic Jewish literature, prayer cannot be considered a unique motif linking these texts.”⁹²

⁸⁹ Other similarities could be noted as well. It is interesting that in Esther, God takes away sleep from Xerxes, causing the royal chronicles to be read and Mordechai to be honored. In 3 Maccabees, however, God imposes sleep on Ptolemy, thus sparing the Jews for one day. Ptolemy's desire to enter the Temple might also serve as a parallel to Antiochus IV's attempt to desecrate the Temple, and thus echo the “Abomination that Causes Desolation” motif found in Daniel.

⁹⁰ Noah Hacham, “3 Maccabees and Esther: Parallels, Intertextuality, and Diaspora Identity,” *JBL* 126 (2007): 765–85, esp. 126.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 770–771.

⁹² *Ibid.*

He concludes, “The parallels listed between these two works enable neither deduction of familiarity between them nor determination of its direction.”⁹³

However, Hacham does think that there is interdependence between the two texts. He gives the following reasons:

First, several of these examples pertain to words whose earliest occurrence is attested in the LXX, and to a unique expression that appears nowhere else in ancient literature. Second, a majority of the examples of linguistic affinity between 3 Maccabees and Esther are concentrated in two of the Additions to Greek Esther, the royal letters.⁹⁴

In other words, neologisms and expressions found in both books are mainly limited to Additions B and E in Esther, and thus show an affinity between 3 Maccabees and these Additions.⁹⁵ Since there are so many linguistic parallels between Additions B and E and the rest of 3 Maccabees, Hacham believes that “these two letters specifically were composed *after* [italics his], and influenced *by* [italics his], 3 Maccabees in its entirety.”⁹⁶ In other words, the stories in both books are similar because they both come out of the Hellenistic-Jewish milieu, and so emphasize common themes like prayer, feasting, and the destruction of the Jewish people. However, the close linguistic ties between 3 Maccabees and Additions B and E show that Additions B and E came after 3 Maccabees and were heavily dependent upon it.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 771.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 777–778.

⁹⁵ As it is not the purpose of this paper to examine all of Hacham’s evidence, the reader is referred to his paper for further information. Tov, however, brings up two important caveats. First, he notes, “The term neologism must be used with caution since most neologisms are composed of elements which were previously known to the translator and their contemporaries.” See Emmanuel Tov, “Compound Words in the Septuagint Representing Two or More Hebrew Words,” in *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 72; Leiden: Brill, 1999), esp. 139. In this case, the similar words are not “neologisms” proper, since they are used only a handful of times to convey a specific meaning (cf. the way German is able to make new words). Tov then gives another reason to be cautious of neologisms: “a word described as a neologism on the bases of our present knowledge may, in fact, be contained in an as yet unpublished papyrus fragment or the word may never have been used in written language.” See *ibid.*, 140. Thus, Hacham’s arguments based upon neologisms should always be taken with a grain of salt.

⁹⁶ Hacham, “3 Maccabees and Esther,” 779.

Additions C and D

Narratively speaking, Additions C and D are situated near the middle of Greek Esther, and thus form the heart of the book. Indeed, Moore writes that Addition D is “unquestionably the dramatic climax of the Greek Esther.”⁹⁷ Addition C contains the prayers of Mordechai and Esther before Esther goes in to see the king. Mordechai’s prayer is recorded first. In his prayer, he swears to God that “it was not in insolence or pride or for any love of glory that I did this, and refused to bow down to this proud Haman; [...] But I did this so that I might not set human glory above the glory of God, and I will not bow down to anyone but you” (Esther 13:12, 13:14).

Esther’s prayer is longer and attempts to reconcile her faithfulness to God with her duties as a Persian queen. Esther humbles herself by placing ashes and dung on her head and wearing mourning clothes. Then she prays for God to save the Jews and to give her courage to face the king and stop Haman (Esther 14:12–13). Esther then prays: “I hate the splendor of the wicked and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised [...]. I abhor the sign of my proud position [...]. I abhor it like a filthy rag [...]. And your servant has not eaten at Haman’s table, and I have not honored the king’s feast or drunk the wine of libations” (Esther 14:15–17). From her prayer, it is clear that Esther takes no joy in her role as queen. She hates her crown, royal feasts, and even the royal bed. Throughout the entire book of Esther, both in the Hebrew and the Greek versions, there is clear tension for Esther. She is torn between being a model Jew and her royal responsibilities, both in the harem and then as Xerxes’s wife. The MT never addresses how Esther practices her Israelite religion as a Persian queen, or whether she has dietary or work restrictions in accordance with the Torah. Addition C specifically addresses these tensions: Esther fulfills her queenly duties as far as her religion allows, but resents them.

⁹⁷ Moore, “Origins,” 393.

There are also some important discrepancies between the version of Addition C in the LXX and that of the AT. In LXX 13:12, Mordechai states that he “refused to bow down to this proud Haman.”⁹⁸ In the AT, however, he states he did not bow down to “uncircumcised Haman.”⁹⁹ Here in the AT, Mordechai echoes Esther’s later disdain for uncircumcised gentiles, thus emphasizing fidelity to the Mosaic Covenant. There are also several discrepancies that seem like scribal errors. For example, in 13:22, Esther prays, “do not surrender your scepter to what has no being [τοῖς μὴ οὐσιν],” while the same verse in the AT has “to your enemies who hate you [τοῖς μισοῦσί σε ἐχθροῖς].” Here, the words for “what has no being” are very similar in Greek to “those who hate.” Later (in 14:17), Esther states, “your servant has not eaten at Haman’s table [τράπεζαν Αμαν],” while the AT reads “at their tables at the same time [ἐπὶ τῶν τραπεζῶν αὐτῶν ἅμα].” Again, “Haman’s table” in Greek is very close to “their tables.” In keeping with what Hacham said above, the Additions seem to have been copied from the LXX to the AT, and these scribal mistakes seem to prove the point.¹⁰⁰

Gardner notes that while 14:6–12 is not included in Josephus (Josephus, *Ant.* 11.6.8), Additions C and D were “probably part of the semitic *Vorlage* of the Book of Esther.”¹⁰¹ Moore agrees that Addition C was probably based upon an Aramaic *Vorlage*, and places the *terminus ad quem* for its composition—except for 14:6–12—at 94 CE, “the date of Josephus’ *Antiquities*.”¹⁰² She maintains that “since Josephus [...] of the first century A.D. and the OL [Old Latin version]

⁹⁸ τὸν ὑπερήφανον Αμαν.

⁹⁹ τὸν ἀπερίτμητον Αμαν.

¹⁰⁰ This is similar to Tov’s view. He believes that “L [AT] is closely connected with the LXX of Esther and even depends upon it.” See Tov, “The ‘Lucianic’ Text,” 536. He goes on to examine instances where different readings in the LXX and AT seem to result from scribal errors in copying from the LXX to the AT. Because of these, he writes, “L [AT] reflects a revision of the LXX.” See *ibid.*, 538.

¹⁰¹ Gardner, “Relationship of Additions,” 2, 5.

¹⁰² Moore, “Origins,” 393.

of the second century omit C 17–23, these verses must have had a different author from that of C 1–16.”¹⁰³ Martin agrees, and identifies Addition C as translated Greek.¹⁰⁴

Addition D is the narrative high point of Greek Esther, but in many ways it raises the most questions. Indeed, Moore writes, “The establishment of Purim is the *raison d’être* of the Hebrew version, while God’s miraculous deliverance of Queen Esther (D 8) is the climax in the Greek.”¹⁰⁵ Addition D follows Addition C directly and tells the story of Esther’s entrance before the king. Esther, arrayed in all her beauty, enters the king’s throne room. The king looks at her in fury, whereupon Esther faints. God then softens the king’s heart, and the king revives her and reassures her. In the LXX, Esther then faints again.

Jobes and Silva make an important observation concerning Addition D: “it is woven within the Greek verses translating the Hebrew text of 5:1–2, expanding these two Hebrew verses to sixteen in the Greek.”¹⁰⁶ This is the only Addition that is interwoven within the translation of the Hebrew text. In other words, instead of being a block of text that has no parallel in the Hebrew text, Addition D is written into the Hebrew translation. But the Addition is unique in other ways as well, as noted by Jobes and Silva:

The Hebrew text of Esther 5:1 is trisected at exactly the same place in both the o’-Text of the AT by the insertion of additional text [...]. The fact that addition D is interwoven with the translation of the Hebrew text at exactly the same places in both Greek versions indicates that this addition was copied from one Greek version to the other.¹⁰⁷

There are two main differences to note between the LXX and the AT versions of Addition D. In the LXX, Esther enters uninvited, and then the king “lifting his face, flushed with splendor, [...] looked at her in fierce anger” (Esther 15:7). The AT reads, “as a bull in the height

¹⁰³ Moore, “Origins,” 390. See n. 37.

¹⁰⁴ Martin, “Syntax Criticism,” 72.

¹⁰⁵ Moore, “Origins,” 390. See n. 38.

¹⁰⁶ Jobes and Silva, *Introduction*, 253.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

of his anger” (ὡς ταῦρος ἐν ἄκμῃ θυμοῦ αὐτοῦ).¹⁰⁸ Jobes and Silva write, “The OL version of Esther also describes the king at this point in the text as an enraged bull [...]. All four surviving manuscripts of the AT include the reference to the bull.”¹⁰⁹ They conclude by suggesting two possibilities:

either (a) the AT is closer to the Greek *Vorlage* from which the OL was translated than is the o'-Text, or (b) one or more manuscripts of the AT were revised that agree with the OL reading at some point early enough in its transmission history that the reading proliferated to all four extant, medieval manuscripts.¹¹⁰

This is one instance in which the OL may hold clues to the composition history of Esther.

Martin considers Addition D an example of translated Greek. Moore, on the other hand, considers it “impossible to prove” if it was translated from a Semitic source or composed in Greek, but ends by suggesting “that Add D was Greek in origin and that, like B, C, and E, had a *terminus ad quem* of A.D. 94” to align with Josephus.¹¹¹

Summary

Since the Additions are interspersed throughout Esther, they have been categorized in a variety of ways. One of the most common, and the one used in this thesis, marks the Additions as chapters 10–16. The Additions also seem to have been paired off. Additions A and F go together, as do Additions B and E and C and D. Each pair is arranged in a concentric fashion, with A and F bookend the book, B and E standing toward the ends, and C and D at the middle. Yet this careful arrangement does not mean that one author wrote the Additions, or even that they were all written at close to the same time. This is evident from Addition F, which is different enough

¹⁰⁸ The translation is the author's own.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Moore, “Origins,” 393.

in the LXX and AT to inspire the theory that Addition A was originally a separate composition, which then came to be adapted to the Esther story.

Most of the Additions are independent compositions with no Semitic *Vorlagen* from any surviving manuscripts. Since the majority of the Additions are complete blocks of text, the theory that the Additions were all secondary interpolations to the Esther story has weight. Addition D is unique among the Additions, however, since it is interwoven with the first two verses of chapter 5 in Esther. By recording both Mordechai's and Esther's prayer before she goes to see the king (Addition C), and by expanding two Hebrew verses to sixteen (Addition D), the entrance of Esther before the king is made into the dramatic high point of both versions of Greek Esther. Thus, Addition D shifts the focus away from the establishment of Purim (the narrative high point of Hebrew Esther) and towards Esther's appearance before the king.

Lastly, the Additions were not all written in one language. It is universally agreed that Additions B and E were original Greek compositions, while the rest were written in either Hebrew or Aramaic. At the surface level, it seems a safe assumption that Additions A, C, D and F, originally in Hebrew or Aramaic, were written before the Additions in Greek (B and E). de

Conclusion

While some Additions are thought to have been written either in Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek, they are all seen as secondary material. This means that they were written after the book of Esther was already comprised of Chapters 1–10. And while both Greek versions of Esther, the LXX and AT, disagree textually to a large extent, the similarities in versions of the Additions found in each version of Esther show that they travelled taken from one translation to the other. Moore explains this clearly: “The AT and the LXX disagree with one another much less in the Additions than in their canonical portions, a fact best explained by theorizing that one text borrowed its Additions from the other.”¹¹² However, even after the borrowing the various Additions were reworked, since the differences between them in the LXX and AT are numerous.

But why the Additions? What do they add to the story of Esther? G. W. E. Nicklesburg gives two answers. First, he suggests that “From a literary point of view, the additions and changes embellish and reinforce the genre and sharpen the focus on the fate of the people [...]. They also enhance the book’s dramatic appeal and add a note of authenticity.”¹¹³ This point is evident throughout all of the Additions.

In Addition A, Mordechai suddenly receives a strange, apocalyptic dream. This sets the stage for the story of Esther. Later, in Addition F, Mordechai recounts the dream and is finally able to see its interpretation in the events that have just transpired.¹¹⁴ This apocalyptic dream and its interpretation heighten the dramatic effect of the story as a battle between the nations and Israel. Additions B and C recount the royal letters that the king sent, first enacting the massacre

¹¹² Moore, *The Additions*, 165.

¹¹³ G. W. E. Nickelsburg, “The Bible Rewritten and Expanded,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (ed. Michael E. Stone; *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum: The Literature of the Jewish People in the Second Temple and the Talmud* 2; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 89–156, esp. 137.

¹¹⁴ It is important to remember, though, that Addition F interprets the dream in different ways in the LXX and AT versions.

of the Jews and then rescinding it. Again, these letters heighten the drama, as the reader is given a window into the minds of the king and Haman. However, these letters also purport to relate the decree verbatim, and thus lend credence to the historicity of Esther. It is clear why these Additions were written. The MT mentions both letters of the king but fails to provide their contents. This provided fertile ground for a later writer to compose them.

Lastly, it has already been mentioned that Addition D is the dramatic high point of Greek Esther. Moore elaborates on this: “The presence of the Additions [...] shifts the focus from the cultic to the ‘religious,’ from the military deliverance by the people themselves on a certain date to God’s miraculous deliverance of Esther, the latter event being the climax in the Greek version.”¹¹⁵ In Greek Esther, it is the entrance of Esther before the king and her subsequent delivery that is the high point of the story. Addition C serves as the prologue for the episode and heightens the suspense by including both Mordechai’s and Esther’s prayer before her entrance. Two things that are lacking in MT Esther are present in full force in Addition C. First, Mordechai claims to have not bowed down before Haman because he glorifies God alone (Esther 13:13–14). Next, Esther begins her prayer by mentioning God’s election of Israel and Israel’s subsequent sin and fall. She ends her prayer by stating her hatred of “the bed of the uncircumcised,” her own crown, and royal banquets (Esther 14:15). Her only joy is the “Lord God of Abraham” (Esther 14:18).

These two major differences are key components of Nicklesburg’s second point: that “The additions and changes add an explicitly religious dimension to the original form of the book, which never mentions God.”¹¹⁶ Indeed, God is mentioned in each one of the Additions, whether sending a dream (Addition A), calling the Jews by his own name (Addition E), or

¹¹⁵ Moore, *The Additions*, 160.

¹¹⁶ Nickelsburg, “The Bible Rewritten,” 137.

intervening of behalf of Israel (Addition C). The Additions expand upon the story of Esther in two ways: they add drama and they include God.

Concerning the provenance of the Additions, opinions differ from scholar to scholar. Nicklesburg, following the Italian scholar Motzo, notes the similarities between 3 Maccabees and Greek Esther, and speculates that “the purpose of such a revision might have been to introduce into Egyptian Jewry the celebration of the feast of Purim in the place of the festival that commemorated the Jews’ deliverance from death in the hippodrome.”¹¹⁷ This is a clever idea, and it accords with the fact that the colophon mentions that the book came to Egypt from Judaea. However, this theory rests upon a belief in the essential historicity of both the events in the hippodrome and the feast of deliverance afterwards in 3 Maccabees. Needless to say, most scholars do not accept the historicity of these events.

Clines has another interesting suggestion which attempts to tie Greek Esther to other exilic books of the Hebrew Bible. He argues that, “The effect of the Additions was to assimilate the book to the norm established by Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel.” He continues as follows:

The primary elements of the book’s theological statement are that the providence of God is to be relied on to reverse the ill-fortunes of Israel and that divine action and human initiatives are complementary and both indispensable for ‘salvation’. The Septuagint Esther, by establishing a connection with the ‘Persian histories’, invites us to consider the appropriateness of such a statement for these writings as a group and present, if you like, the Esther story as an interpretative tool for appreciating those books that have now become its kin.¹¹⁸

Royal letters play a major role in Ezra and Nehemiah, and the book of Daniel contains apocalyptic dreams. None of these tropes are found in MT Esther, but they all appear in the Additions. It seems possible, then, that the Additions were written to approximate Esther to other Persian-period books by imitating Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Clines, *Story of a Scroll*, 174.

Hacham takes a different tack in studying the Additions. In his analysis 3 Maccabees and Greek Esther, he notes several subtle differences. In 3 Maccabees, the king himself is evil and attempts to destroy the Jews; in Esther, the king is tricked by evil Haman into destroying the Jews. In Esther, the Jews are allowed to kill non-Jews, while in 3 Maccabees they only kill other (apostate) Jews. Hacham notes that each book sheds light on Diaspora Jewish issues, such as “the degree of trust in the regime’s goodwill toward Jews, the appropriate response to non-Jewish hostility, and identification of the main threat to Diaspora Jewish existence.”¹¹⁹ He goes on to suggest that “the author of the book of Esther apparently experiences greater security [than the author of 3 Maccabees] in Diaspora existence and places trust in the Jewish representatives in government.”¹²⁰

The Additions, placing the story of Esther squarely in the Persian Period, thus also reflect their authors’ own times. If Esther, along with the other Persian period texts, shows God’s saving actions on behalf of Israel in the past, it could scarcely mean anything else for the Additions’ authors and their own communities. Hacham aptly sums up, “Just as the Jews were saved in Esther’s day and achieved ongoing recognition of their religious rights, such an outcome was feasible in the author’s day.”¹²¹ In this way, the story of Esther becomes one of hope: God had acted to save Israel before, and would act again on behalf of the Jews in the Hellenistic empires.¹²² In lieu of any concrete information about the provenance of the Additions, perhaps only the above can be said with confidence.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Hacham, “3 Maccabees and Esther,” 783.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 784.

¹²² It should be noted that this hope is not restricted to the Additions. Indeed, the entire MT Esther is dedicated to the feast of Purim, which ties God’s preservation of Israel in the past to God’s preservation of Israel in the future.

¹²³ Curiously, Esther 16:16 (Addition E) speaks of God “who has directed the kingdom both for us and for your ancestors in the most excellent order” (τοῦ κατευθύνοντος ἡμῶν τε καὶ τοῖς προγόνοις ἡμῶν τὴν βασιλείαν ἐν τῇ καλλίστῃ διαθέσει). The word διάθεσις is related to the word “covenant” (διαθήκη) and could possibly mean the same thing. If so, then this verse speaks of God entering into covenants with nations and kingdoms besides Israel.

Yet Moore goes on to say, “The Additions are both a symptom and a result of Esther’s questionable status.”¹²⁴ He suggests that “the Additions were invented to strengthen the book’s deficiencies, but only a book with questionable canonical status permitted such ‘presumptuous’ tampering with the text.”¹²⁵ Discussion concerning the book’s canonicity is outside the scope of this paper, but it is worth noting that Moore sees the book’s questionable canonical status, at least during the second century BCE, as having provided room for the Additions to be written and included in Esther.¹²⁶

The Additions of Esther continue to fascinate scholars because they can be used for several things. First, they are used to reconstruct the compositional/redaction history of Esther. Secondly, the Additions provide a small window into Jewish life in the Diaspora. Investigating the themes and motifs of the Additions can help us understand how Esther was received by the Jewish Diaspora community. As Hacham points out, different books written during the Hellenistic period show different attitudes concerning Diaspora life. This is not surprising, since the Jewish people were scattered from Persian to Asia Minor and North Africa. Ultimately, however, the Additions raise more questions than they solve, which has led to countless different opinions about their provenance and their significance for the history of Esther. Until new discoveries are made, it seems a hopeless task to attempt to solve the Esther riddle. This is quite ironic, as the Esther story is one that has inspired hope that God cares for his people and will

This might reflect the late-Biblical idea of God working through Gentile people and nations, as might be seen in Cyrus in Isaiah and the statue of Gentile kingdoms in Daniel.

¹²⁴ Moore, *The Additions*, 160.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ It is commonly noted that Esther was virtually ignored by the Christian Church until the ninth or tenth century CE. Perhaps the earliest Christian reference to Esther is 1 Clement 55:6, which mentions how Esther saved “the twelve tribes of Israel when they were about to be destroyed.” Judith is also mentioned in connection with Esther in the same chapter. It is clear that ca. 100 CE at the earliest, the book of Esther (and Judith!) was considered authoritative by at least some leaders of the Roman Church. See text and translation in Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (3d ed; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

save them. It has been read in this way by both Jews and Christians for centuries, and it will continue to be a meaningful story of hope for generations to come.

Appendix A

The Numbering and Order of the Additions Used in this Thesis¹²⁷

<u>Addition A</u> Mordechai's Dream Ch. 11:2–12	Ch. 1–3	<u>Addition B</u> Royal Letter Ch. 13:1–7	Ch. 3–4	<u>Addition C</u> Mordechai's Prayer, Esther's Prayer Ch. 13:8–14:19
<u>Addition D</u> Esther's Entrance before the King Ch. 15	Ch. 5–8	<u>Addition E</u> Royal Letter Revoke Destruction Ch. 16	Ch. 8–10:3	<u>Addition F</u> Interpretation of Mordechai's Dream Ch. 10:4–11:1

¹²⁷ This is just one way to number the Additions, but it is the order used by the NRSV and by this thesis. Additionally, some Additions in the AT receive their own versification since they differ so much from their corresponding Additions in the LXX.

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